DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 146 TM 030 682

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE The Principal and Evaluation of Student Achievement.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Administrator Role; *Constructivism (Learning); Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Instructional Leadership; Performance Based Assessment; *Principals; *Student Evaluation

ABSTRACT

The role of the principal in evaluating student achievement is discussed in this paper. The principal is in a leadership position and has the duty of improving the ways in which students are evaluated. Educators often are blamed for poor academic achievement for which they really cannot be held responsible, but there certainly are areas in which principals can make a great difference in the evaluation of student achievement. Evaluation techniques chosen should be valid and reliable. Standardized tests do provide measures of student achievement, but the teacher is in a better position to write test items that really cover what is being taught. Taking a constructivist approach to evaluation through techniques such as portfolios is something a principal can foster. The principles of constructivism emphasize evaluating the student in context, assessing performance continually, providing feedback, strengthening student self-evaluation, and working collaboratively to promote student achievement. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 439 146

The Principal and Evaluation of Student Achievement

Marlow Ediger

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Marlow Ediger
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

TM030682

THE PRINCIPAL AND EVALUATION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The school principal is in a leadership position to improve the curriculum. He/she needs to assist and lead in improving how student are evaluated. Much is written about evaluating learner progress. It almost appears as if educators in the United States are obsessed with the concept of finding out what pupils have learned. The term "appraise" may also be used in the educational literature to ascertain what each student has learned. Documenting student progress has almost overtaken articles written by professors in order to let the lay public know what students have achieved.

Perhaps, a major reason for the emphasis placed upon appraising student achievement is due to criticisms pertaining to learner achievement within the United States as well as in international comparisons,, such as the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

Newspaper reporters seemingly are quick to jump on the bandwagon when criticisms are made of the public schools. Test results provide much cannon fodder for newsreporters when assessing the public school. That single score, such as percentiles, standard deviations, and grade equivalents, among others, provides an "absolute score" for ascertaining how well schools are doing. Generally, not much is said in these reports about socioeconomic levels of those taking the test(s). Approximately, 20 per cent of the pupils living in the United States come from homes where they live on or below the poverty level. It is quite obvious that most tests measure socio-economic levels of students. Consider the high level of achievement of suburban schools as compared to those pupils from inner city or rural schools. Suburbia does indeed provide high test results, as compared to the others.

On TIMMS, it is difficult to determine which pupils are counted within a nation in terms of test takers. In The United States, much stress is placed upon educating the mentally retarded, as well as other handicapped pupils. If a large number of mentally retarded students are counted as test takers in the United States and not in other nations, it will make a big difference as to how well a nation's students do on tests, such as TIMMS. How many pupils from low income nations take a test also will make much difference. It may not be a sin to be poor, but it is mighty unhandy and does not provide the opportunities in life that other learners have. Opportunities to learn in the preschool years and after, such as during vacation time and after school hours, does make much difference in terms of student achievement and progress. Good opportunities to learn are important in school and in society (See Bracey, 1996)..

Who Additionally Tends to Criticize Public School Achievement?

The business world is very quick to lean upon test score results to criticize the public schools. They tend to feel and believe that that the business world can do a much better job of educating than can the public schools. The business world tends to emphasize setting higher standards for pupils to achieve so that results are more optimum. Educators have to be careful in accepting higher standards set for student achievement in that objectives need to be challenging and yet achievable. Certainly, it would be ridiculous to set complex objectives that few students can attain. When unachievable objectives are established, students fail in achievement and may believe they are failures indeed. Why not have achievable objectives that are demanding, and yet learners may experience success in learning? Developing an inadequate self concept through teaching and learning is not acceptable. The home/community already does enough of this. Homes experience too much poverty, student abuse, use of drugs, violence, teen age pregnancy, unwanted children, divorce, and war zone areas with the use of weapons. Certainly, the home/community setting can and must improve much (See Ediger, 1999,219-227).

Also, if any segment of America society should be criticized, it would be the business world. What person has not had nightmares over the following:

1. late cancellation of flights at airports, long slow moving lines to the ticket counter, overbooking, damaged or lost/late arrived baggage.
2. very poor services performed in repairing appliances (Ediger, September 24, 1999, letter to he Editor).
3. obvious over charging for services provided.
4. shoddy goods produced. A lack of accountability in goods and services produced and provided is then in evidence.
5. "business is always right attitude" and yet "the customer comes first" advertisements abound.
6. slogans used as advertisements such as "Where there's a helpful smile in every aisle" in a supermarket advertisement, where the atmosphere in the store is just the opposite (Ediger, (1999, 7-16).
7. huge unnecessary salaries and bonuses for officers in corporations. These officers would definitely work for less than six million dollars a year plus bonuses. High salaries and other benefits add much to the cost of living. There is much that the business world can learn from the public schools pertaining to modest spending and being accountable.
8. poor customer relations involving a lack of considerateness and being rude when dealing with complaints.

9. red tape involved in connecting with the proper business department by phone. The usual "If you what a, press one; if you want b, press two; if you want c, press three, and so on." When one gets the correct department, then a voice recorder is there to take the message. Generally, the call is not returned, even though the company's introduction says, "Your message is very important to us." Or, while one is waiting to speak to the department, there is recorded music and a recorded voice says, "Wait, a customer service department representative will soon be available." The "wearing down approach" is used in that finally the customer hangs up in frustration unable to get the call through to the proper department or office.

10. regulating the business world by governmental laws is necessary to avoid going back to pre-pure food and drug laws of 1907 when anything could be put into a container by the producer without proper labeling. The bottom line is the only important item in the business world. The environment, humaneness, and good human relations do not matter in many situations.

Are Other Facets of Life Accountable?

Sometimes, educators write articles pertaining to how good the medical profession is. The pasture seemingly is always greener on the other side. the medical profession certainly has its problems. When viewing 20/20 November 29, 1999, Stone Phillips reported that up to 120,000 deaths a year of patients may be caused by error in giving the wrong prescription to patients as well as performing incorrect surgeries, even amputating the wrong leg on a patient! The more medical doctors there are in an area the higher the per cent of surgeries performed. There have been many unnecessary surgeries performed; breast surgery on women has been done unnecessarily and has been verified on TV and news broadcasts, among other kinds of surgery. Most people have faced the following very frequently;

1. waiting for hours to see the doctor when coming on time for a scheduled visit. Better scheduling certainly could be done here.
2. rudeness from receptionists and nurses in doctor's offices and in hospitals. Inservice education in working with human beings in an atmosphere of respect is important.
3. poor listening on the part of the doctor to the patients ills. Medical doctors need to become better listeners to what patients say so that a better diagnosis of the illness may be made.
4. inadequate oral communication skills. Many doctors are plagued with not being able to communicate aloud to and with the patient.
5. incompetency in not being able to prescribe a proper remedy for an illness. If a doctor is unable to diagnose and prescribe properly,

he/she should refer the patient to a different doctor.

6. hurrying to see the next patient too frequently is in the offing without taking care of the present patient's needs being met. The bottom line too frequently is perceived by medical doctors as being the ultimate goal. Medical doctors need to realize the trust placed in them to the point of life and death situations. Taking care of patients needs dedication and not the bottom line only or largely.

7. amounts charged by the medical profession for services performed should not cause unnecessary inflation as was true before HMOs came into existence. HMOs came into being, unfortunately, due to doctors overcharging on medical fees, especially with Medicare and Medicaid patients. Medical insurance plans are a definite necessity, but they have certainly caused overbilling by the medical profession. Accountants then have taken over responsibilities for determining what medical doctors can charge. If medical doctors were responsible for charging moderately for their services, they might be better able to provide necessary services to patients without accountants looking over their shoulders. The medical profession by being judicious should make decisions on what any patient needs to recover and live a healthier life style.

8. extremely bad diagnoses cause much family anxiety. My wife in 1991 was diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis (MS). She was well and in good health two months later. The MS was a bad diagnosis and caused extreme feeling of anxiety within the family. One educator wrote that teachers should be held accountable for state mandated objectives for all student to achieve and no excuses! What would medical doctors do if they could not give excuses for all of their foibles? The writer does not see that the there are greener pastures in the medical profession. Do teachers make as serious errors as do medical doctors? The writer thinks not.

Evaluation of Student Progress

The principal does not need to feel that teaching in the public schools is of low status. In fact, it should have high status. When serving as a teacher on the West Bank of the Jordan River at Friends Boy's School, Ramallah, teachers had a very high status. Parents were willing to trust the school completely for educating their children. Perhaps, there should have been much parent involvement with conferences, visits, correspondence by mail, and by telephone. But, this was not the case. However, there appeared to be much trust between parents and the teachers. The news media was not critical, at all, of schools and school systems.

Education in the United States would improve much if the news media would not degrade the public schools. Constructive criticism is

always welcomed in moving from where students are presently in achievement to where they should be. But to lambast the public schools without providing any constructive assistance has no value and worth.

There are numerous evaluation procedures that the principal should provide leadership in to improve instruction. Evaluation techniques need to be valid and reliable. They should be clearly written so that each technique truly evaluates student progress. Thus, the following teacher written test items can provide a basis, along with other evaluation techniques, in ascertaining what pupils have learned and achieved (See Ediger, 1999, ERIC):

1. multiple choice test items whereby each response is plausible in order to eliminate pupil guessing which is the correct answer of the four responses.

1. true/false test items whereby pupils correct what is false in a true/false item.

3. matching items in which the first column of the two columns has more categories than does the second column to be matched. With more items to be matched in column A, there are less chances for test takers to guess correct responses through the process of elimination.

4. completion items whereby there is enough information given so that pupils understand what is wanted to fill in the blank spaces. The following would indeed be vague: ____ and ____ are important agricultural products grown in _____ .

5. essay items which are adequately delimited in order that a reasonable length of response, not an entire book, may be written by the learner. The response to the essay test item should not be too narrow in which a fact or two may be written as answers. An essay test should have items which require deliberation, critical and creative thinking, as well as problem solving.

There are additional criteria which need to be followed to write each of the above kinds of test items. Principals and teachers need to keep abreast in using appropriate criteria to write quality teacher written test items. Teacher education textbooks on tests and measurements need to be consulted to write the best possible teacher whiten test items.

Standardized tests are used quite frequently to ascertain pupil achievement. Principals need to be aware that there are no related objectives for teachers to teach toward that come from writers of standardized tests. Validity in testing then is a problem with standardized tests.These kinds of tests also are developed externally by individuals who do not know the pupils being taught in the classroom. The teacher is in a much better position to write good test items that truly cover what has been taught since he/she is in charge of providing teaching and learning situations (See Taylor, et. al., 1999).

State mandated tests, generally developed by the state

department of education, tend to have objectives directly related to items on their criterion referenced tests (CRT). These objectives become the criteria which teachers may use in teaching so that the ends can be achieved by learners. The CRTs also tend to measure that which is contained in the stated objectives. Thus, there should be high validity and reliability in the testing situation. However, test writers of CRTs also are removed from the local teaching and learning situation cannot know what pupils have studied previously or will be studying to make for good sequence in learning. Both CRTs and norm referenced standardized tests possess test items that are out of context to what is being stressed in the classroom. Context is highly important when thinking of what pupils have learned and what is left to learn within a selected order or sequence.

This does not mean that standardized and CRTs should not be used in determining what pupils have learned. Ideally, what was missed by pupils on either test should be analyzed to determine its worth and value to emphasize as objectives of instruction. What has been missed by pupils can provide new objectives to stress in teaching and learning. However, a single score should not replace what pupils are learning on a day to day basis in the classroom in which teacher written tests, and other procedures, may be used to assist in appraising learner progress. The best kind of evaluation should take place in context. The pupil then knows what to do to improve achievement as the learning opportunity progresses.In addition to well written test items to ascertain learner achievement, the teacher should also use the following approaches in the evaluation process:

1. observation of what pupils are doing well and what needs more assistance to guide the latter's achievement. Observation by the teacher can occur continuously.

2. rating scales to rate on a four or five point scale how well pupils are achieving on a specific item, such as end punctuation marks of a paragraph.

3. checklists for teachers to check which objective(s) in a set need more emphasis for pupil learning.

4. anecdotal statements of a few sentences per child to notice how well a pupil is achieving a particular objective. The entry needs to be dated and, if possible, written on a weekly or monthly basis..

5. diary entries may be kept on a day to day basis and dated to notice learner achievement in social development, attitudes, and motivation. Comparisons may be made of earlier as compared to later diary entries to notice pupil progress in the evaluation process.

6. discussions provide a good situation to determine what pupils have learned and what is left to learn. Quality procedures for participants to participate in the discussion need to be stressed. All pupils should be encouraged to attain optimally in a discussion.

7. products constructed by pupils individually or collectively may be appraised by using a rubric form of evaluation.

8. art work directly related to the ongoing or completed thematic unit of study may be assessed to notice achievement of a pupil over previous efforts.

9. committee work should be appraised continuously to notice each learner's progress. Quality criteria should be emphasized in evaluating ongoing processes in committee endeavors.

10. self evaluation by pupils can provide a teacher with valuable feedback pertaining to quality pupil scope and sequence in the thematic unit of study.

A rather recent approach has been to use portfolios in assessing learner progress. The port folio should be developed cooperatively by the pupil involved with teacher assistance. Port folio items may include the following pertaining to products and processes in unit teaching:

1. written work involving a variety of purposes in writing.
2. cassettes of oral communication experiences involving numerous kinds of speaking activities.
3. a video tape of committee participation.
4. snapshots of construction work and art ideas completed.
5. self evaluation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired.
6. teacher written test results.
7. results of pupil research conducted in the classroom and in society.
8. metacognition statements of what has been learned and what is left to learn in an ongoing thematic unit of study..
9. pupil goals in terms of what he/she would like to achieve as a part of the ongoing/future unit of study or as enrichment experiences.
10. teacher/pupil results of conferences pertaining to assisting the latter in motivation, interests, and purposes.

Portfolios emphasize a philosophy of constructivism in that the evaluation results come form within the classroom setting, not from external people disconnected with the local situation of teaching and learning. Constructivism stresses evaluating the everyday products and processes of learners in the classroom setting, not a one shot test score such as percentile rank, standard deviation, and/or quartile deviation from taking a standardized or criterion referenced test. Constructivism views the work of pupils in each lesson and thematic unit of study with the intent of guiding pupils to achieve continuously. It stresses heavy pupil involvement in developing the port folio, as compared to no pupil input into developing standardized and criterion referenced tests. Both pupil and teacher involvement are emphasized in portfolio completion. The results are shared with parents in which there are definite pupil

products and processes for parents to appraise and raise questions about. A single test score leaves little/no room for comments and questions by parents. Thus, parents need to look at specifics within a portfolio to see what and how pupils are doing in school work. a parent/teacher conference may follow whereby parents/teachers may work together on specifics for the good of the child (See Walker, 1999, 18-21).

Conclusion

Each profession, each institution, and each worker in society needs to be accountable. Everyone needs to desire to improve the self. Each segment of society should provide better and improved goods/services. There are no greener pastures when assessing the quality of work of one profession to another. Educators should be proud of what has been accomplished and look very carefully at what is left to be achieved. Evaluation for all should be continuous and ongoing.

School performance of learners needs to be evaluated continuously to notice sequential progress of students.

How should pupils be appraised to indicate achievement and progress? Standardized and criterion referenced tests stress the following:

1. A single test score from pupils obtained once a school year or less in time duration.
2. Externally devised test items whereby the test writers have no knowledge of the pupil being tested.
3. No feedback to pupils and parents as well as to teachers of what has been missed and what is left to learn.
4. No sequence of items asked within the testing situation.
5. No opportunities for any pupil to clarify an item on the test. Test writers are only human and may not write clearly stated items even after pilot studies have been made. Subjectivity is definitely inherent in writing standardized and criterion referenced tests.

Constructivism emphasizes the following.

1. Evaluation in context.
2. Continuous appraisal which is ongoing in different lessons and units of study.
3. Feedback to pupils which is continuous in each learning opportunity.
4. Pupil involvement in appraising the self.
5. Cooperative endeavors with teacher/student involvement in appraising the latter.

References

Bracey, Gerald (1996), "Money Improves Test Scores---Even State Level SATS," Phi Delta Kappan, 78 (1), 91-92.

Ediger, Marlow (1999), Improving School Administration. Kirksville, Missouri, 219-227.

Ediger, Marlow (September 24, 1999), Letter to the Editor, Kirksville, Missouri Daily Express, Kirksville, Missouri 63501, about very poor services given for computer repair.

Ediger, Marlow (1999), "Slogans in Society," Journal of Instructional Psychology, 26 (1), 7-16.

Ediger, Marlow (1999), "Purposes in Learner Assessment," Resources in Education. Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), US Department of Education.

Taylor, Barbara M., et. al., "Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, Effective Schools/Accomplished Teachers" The Reading Teacher, 53 (2), 156-159.

Walker, Decker (1999), "Technology and Literacy: Raising the Bar," Educational Leadership, 57 (2), 18-21.